

## CLAIMS

We Claim:

1. A method in a computer system for organizing and displaying notification items associated with corresponding notifications on a display having a notification area, comprising:

identifying an item associated with a notification area icon; and  
monitoring the item for activity.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

arranging the notification area items in the order in which the notifications occur.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

comparing the level of activity for the monitored item against a predetermined threshold value; and

hiding the monitored item from view, if the level of activity is less than the threshold value.

4. The method as recited in claim 3, further comprising:

determining the occurrence of activity on the monitored and hidden item; and  
unhiding the item by redisplaying the item upon the occurrence of activity.

5. The method as recited in claim 4, further comprising:

monitoring for the item most recently active; and unhiding items in the order of the most recently active item.

6. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

7. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 1.

8. In a computer system having a graphical user interface including a display, a method of displaying and organizing notification items within a notification area, said method comprising:

hiding inactive notification item icons that meet a preset threshold of inactivity;

retrieving a chevron icon;

displaying the chevron icon; and

upon meeting an unhide criteria, displaying and arranging each of the notification items in the notification area and removing the chevron icon when there are no more hidden items.

9. The method as recited in claim 8, further comprising receiving a chevron entry selection signal indicative of a user selection of the chevron icon, and, in

response to the chevron selection signal, displaying each of the hidden notification items on the display.

10. The method as recited in claim 9, wherein the unhide criteria is met when an entry selection signal indicative of a user selection of the notification item icon is selected by the user from the displayed, previously hidden icons.

11. The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the response to the selection displays the notification item icon in the notification area on the display.

12. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein said notification item icon is placed to the far left of the notification area.

13. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 8.

14. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 8.

15. In a computer system having a graphical user interface including a display, a method of providing and selecting options for configuring notification items within a notification area, said method comprising:

retrieving a notification item, wherein the notification item corresponds to an item displayed in the notification area;

displaying the notification item icon, a description associated with the notification and a behavior characteristic to be associated with the notification item; and

repeating the retrieving step and the displaying step for each of the items that are added to the notification area up to a predetermined maximum number.

16. The method as recited in claim 15, further comprising a selection signal indicative of a user selection of a choice of behavior for a notification item.

17. The method as recited in claim 16, further comprising a method to reset the behavior associated with each notification item to a default state.

18. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein display of the notification icon, description and behavior on the display includes displaying the item in an order associated with the appearance of the item in the notification area.

19. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the addition of items beyond the predetermined maximum will result in the oldest items being replaced sequentially.

20. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 15.

21. A computer system having a processor, a memory and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 15.